

Martin McGrath

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BE AWARE

By Martin McGrath

"It was the same with all the... umm... " Markus shuffled in his chair. Anne watched the old man lift the china teacup to his lips and blow on the contents. His body trembled, each part following different rhythms. His hands did a waltz while his head bobbed to a polka. The task of matching cup to lip was complex and lengthy. Markus's eyes, however, were sharp, steady and steel-grey. They never left Anne's face.

"...Nazis. It was always the same... all of them were... disappointing," Markus was plainly uncomfortable. "In the flesh. It was the newsreels, you see. We watched them on those giant cinema screens, each one a colossus fifteen and twenty feet high, in those beautiful uniforms, and they

seemed like gods. When they finally stood beside you, well you couldn't help but feel a let down." Markus finished with a shrug that slopped tea into his lap. He pulled a red handkerchief from the pocket of his tweed jacket and rubbed at the dampness, muttering to himself.

Anne looked away to the expanse of fields beyond the house.

They were sitting in a conservatory at the back of Markus Muller's farmhouse. Outside, the low hills of the Palouse rolled away to the East and North. It was midsummer and the land was a golden ocean of swaying wheat. This was Anne's first visit to Idaho. Its beauty had surprised her.

"I have become a silly old man," Markus smiled at Anne. "But I am getting away from the story you came all this way to hear. So, yes, my first impressions of Albert Speer were not good. He was a little taller than average, perhaps, and handsome, I suppose, but his hair was already thinning and he combed it across his head. I have always found that rather unappealing."

Markus ran a hand along the river of scalp that separated the last of his own neatly-trimmed silver hair.

"Of course many women did not agree with me. But I think it was the power of the uniform, more than the man, that made him attractive."

Anne nodded scratching something in her notebook. She was slim and young and her hair and eyes were the colour of

chocolate. She was, Markus thought, very like Judith. He missed his wife.

"You met him often?" Anne asked, innocent of the tears glossing the old man's eyes. "Albert Speer, I mean."

Markus took a moment to reply.

"No. I saw him only three, perhaps four times."

"You're not sure?" Anne was momentarily afraid that her trip would be wasted. Had the old man's mind gone?

"It is..." Markus stopped again. "It is complicated. If I start from the beginning and you can judge for yourself?"

Anne nodded.

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Four of them walked down the wide, white staircase and onto the landing. Two, Dr Fritz Todt and Albert Speer, wore the brown uniforms of Nazi officials and the slap of their boots echoed off the marble walls of the Prussian Statistical Office. The third man was August Schaub, a fat, pale man with lank blond hair and an ill-fitting but expensive suit. Markus Muller, dapper and enthusiastic, led the way.

Todt was not an impressive man, but it was clear from the way the others moved around him and laughed at his jokes, that he had power. Todt had got Germany back to work, the papers said. He was the man responsible for the autobahn and all the great technical achievements of the new Germany. He was perhaps the only man in Germany to rival Hitler in

popularity. He spoke, the others listened.

"...I told Adolf, he needn't have bothered sending the army to Rhineland, I was planning a driving holiday there this summer anyway."

The other three roared with laughter. Albert Speer slapped Markus on the back.

"These are great times to be a German!" Speer said.

Markus looked up. Schaub was leering at him.

"Germany is great again," said Schaub. "Such a pity that Herr Muller has divided loyalties."

The laughter stopped. Todt and Speer looked at Markus, expecting an explanation.

"He is an American," Schaub added before Markus could interrupt. "Dehomag has an American partner, IBM, Herr Muller has been sent to make sure that we are behaving ourselves."

The fat man was bitter that Markus had been appointed to a job that, Schaub believed, should have been his.

"I was born in Iowa, but my parents are both German, from Baden-Wuerttemberg," Markus said.

"Well I am from Pforzheim myself!" Todt was obviously delighted. "And Herr Speer is also a Badener. You have good blood young man and blood will out."

Todt turned to Speer.

"What do you say, Herr Speer?"

Speer rubbed his chin for a moment. They were standing in front of the two great oak doors that led into the data

entry hall. From the room beyond came the barely muffled clatter and thwack of hundreds of input engines.

"As you say, Reichsmarshal. A good German is a good German whether he was born in Berlin, The Rhineland or Iowa."

Markus smiled, relaxing. A messenger boy hurried down the corridor carrying a large box. The boy mumbled an apology as he brushed by.

"But I do have a question," Speer said.

"Please," Markus sensed danger. "That is why I am here."

"You have been appointed by IBM to oversee the work here? But I understood Dehomag was a German company. The Fuhrer has made it clear that only German companies may be awarded government contracts."

Speer cocked his head to one side, looking from Markus to Schaub and then back again.

Schaub looked away, only Markus caught the panic in his expression. There was a lot of money at stake here. If Schaub blew this deal...

"I am merely a technical advisor, Herr Speer," Markus said. "Dehomag and IBM are partners, but my expertise with the machines being used for the census operation, and the importance our companies attach to this prestigious contract, made it seem wise that I offer my assistance."

Markus smiled hopefully at Speer who opened his mouth to ask another question - Todt cut him off.

"Enough. Herr Muller is a Badener and that is good

enough for me. We have a busy schedule. Let us move on."

Schaub, visibly relieved, stepped forward and swung open the doors of the data entry room. The crashing noises grew louder and the four men stepped inside.

The data room was cavernous, bright and busy.

Piled on one side of the room was a wall of boxes. Next to it the messenger boy who had passed Markus in the hallway was filling in a form. His box, identical to all the others, sat by his feet. At a long table a dozen women were opening boxes and pulling out hundreds of envelopes. These envelopes were sorted and dropped into trays. Other women collected the trays and took them to one of fifteen large desks scattered regularly throughout the data room. Here the envelopes were sorted again, opened, checked, resealed and put onto trolleys and taken to the girls working the input engines.

The swarm of input engines dominated the room, four hundred and fifty of them, constantly clattering. Clustered together in groups they encircled the larger desks like predatory metal insects. Above each engine, like wings poised for flight, stood tall secretarial stands. A girl served each input engine. She removed a form from each envelope and placed it on the secretarial display. She entered the details from the form on the keyboard and the input engine stamped holes in a punch card. When the form was done, she pulled a lever and the old card dropped away and a new one slotted into place.

When a door opened the breeze caused the forms on their stands to flutter in unison so that the whole room of machines seemed to quicken and prepare for flight.

The engines themselves looked like mutated typewriters. Levers grew from them at odd angles, the casing seemed to have been shattered and the internal contents reassembled on numerous levels.

Around the room, hanging above each of the fifteen sorting desks, hung the same identical sign. Every time one of the girls at the input engines looked up, the sign was there: "Be aware."

"It is tremendously loud, Herr Muller." Reichsmarshal Todt was covering his ears in obvious discomfort. Speer was staring, open-mouthed, around the room with the ecstatic grin of a man having an epiphany.

Markus nodded to Todt and directed his guests to his office. As the door closed behind them the roar of the machines was reduced to a more bearable level.

"It is certainly busy!" Todt settled himself in the room's most comfortable chair and took a cigarette case from his pocket. He took a cigarette and offered the case to the others. "But perhaps you can explain to me exactly what it is all those people are doing?"

The other three men arranged themselves around a low table from which Markus picked up a grey-coloured card. It was about twenty centimetres long and ten deep. The German

government crest, an eagle holding a wreath inside which was a swastika, was printed on each card. The numbers from nought to eighty ran across the top and bottom of the card and the rows in each column were numbered from nought to nine. On the reverse of the card, visible only to Markus, was IBM's logo.

"The cards are the heart of it," Markus said. "At the moment we are working on gathering census information so you should think of each of these cards as a household."

"If only my house was so well ordered," Todt smiled.

"Each column is allocated to one of twenty-five categories, some require more than one column to be fully represented." Markus pointed to the early columns on the card. "These for example, taken together, allow us to exactly identify every address, these the profession of each adult, and these the nationality. By punching holes in the cards, we can store information on every German household."

Markus looked up. Todt was frowning at him through a cloud of cigarette smoke.

"What I mean is, if we punch a hole here," Markus jabbed at the card with his finger hitting row ten, column nought, "then we know this person's origins are German." He stabbed the card again. Row ten, column nine. "But if we put the hole here, we know they are Polish. We know where they live, their age, their job, their religion. All on this card."

Todt smiled encouragingly.

"Very clever, I'm sure, but I really don't see -"

At that moment Speer leaned across between Markus and Todt.

"If I may, Herr Reichsmarshal," Speer was staring fiercely at Markus. "How fast can your machines read these cards, Herr Muller?"

"Each machine reads twenty four thousand - "

"Per day?" Speer interrupted, plainly impressed.

Markus smiled. "Twenty four thousand per hour, Herr Speer."

Speer sat back.

"And how many of these machines do we, I mean, do you have at your disposal?"

"By the end of this year we will have two thousand sets of counting, proofing and analyses machines."

"And they can cross compare the data from all twenty five categories?"

"Of course."

"Remarkable."

Todt stubbed out his cigarette, clearly frustrated.

"Excuse me gentlemen, but I still fail to see -"

"I apologise, Herr Reichsmarshal, " Speer turned to face the older man. "The potential of these machines is extraordinary. In a matter of days they could produce reports that might take months by conventional means."

Todt looked from Markus to Schaub, Speer kept talking.

"Imagine if you had a list of every labourer or engineer

of a suitable age in any town or city. How could anyone avoid their patriotic duty to help rebuild the Fatherland?"

"Your machines could do this?" Todt asked.

"Quite easily," Schaub nodded.

Speer turned to Markus.

"I presume this system is not limited to census information. Any data can be stored on these cards."

"Yes." Markus nodded.

"We could control anything... everything! Why just in the area of stocks and supplies we could... " Speer was jabbing the air with his cigarette. He trailed off, getting lost in his own thoughts.

At that moment the door to the office opened and the roar of the input engines crowded in. A soldier stood in the doorway. He looked flustered.

"I have a message for Herr Speer."

"Can't it wait man? I'm busy."

The soldier straightened himself up.

"It comes from The Fuhrer. He wishes to see you."

Speer snapped out of his chair, rapping his shins against the low table.

"Of course." He turned and bowed slightly to Todt. "If you'll excuse me, Herr Reichsmarshal..."

Todt held up a hand.

"Wait, wait, I'll come with you. I've seen enough here and I have business at the Chancellery." Todt turned to

Markus and Schaub. "Most impressive gentlemen, most impressive indeed. I shall pass on my report to The Fuhrer."

"I will escort you out, Herr Reichsmarshal," Schaub said.

"You will excuse me, I hope," Markus moved behind his desk. "I have much work to do here."

"Of course," Speer said. "This has been most enlightening, Herr Muller. I shall remember today."

Speer rushed out of the office but Todt lingered. He paused by the doorway of Markus' office, forcing Schaub out before him and turned back to Markus.

"This census information, Herr Muller?"

"Yes Reichsmarshal?"

"Your machines will allow us to identify the religion and nationality of everyone living in Germany?"

"Yes, Herr Reichsmarshal."

"Jews?" Todt savoured the word. "It will identify all the Jews?"

Markus nodded. "Yes. Catholics. Protestants. Jews. Everyone will be identified."

"*See everything with an IBM punch card*," Todt nodded at a poster on Markus's wall. "How very apt."

The door of the office closed and Markus was alone. Through the window in his office door he could see the sign above one of the sorting desks.

"Be aware."

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Markus excused himself and Anne listened as he struggled up the stairs to the bathroom. She got up from her seat and stretched. It was almost lunchtime and her stomach was rumbling. The old man did ramble on, she thought, but he was sweet and he was the last survivor of the Schloss Bellevue conference. His story would secure her doctorate.

She wandered into the hallway. The walls were crowded with old pictures mostly, she guessed, from the nineteen thirties. In many of them Markus was standing beside a pretty girl with dark hair. In the centre of one wall was a wedding picture, Markus and the girl looked fiercely proud as they stared into the camera.

"Your wife is beautiful," Anne said as Markus creaked down the stairs.

"She was very beautiful," Markus ran a finger across the cheek of the girl in the photograph, then turned away. "Would you like something to eat?"

*

The car was chugging softly, puffing white clouds into the sharp November air, outside the house on Grunewald Strasse. Markus pushed his case into the street with his foot and, because Judith was still asleep, closed the door softly.

The driver leapt from the car and, pausing only to stamp

out his cigarette, rushed up the steps to grab the case.

"Thank you," Markus picked up his briefcase. "I still don't understand why they had to send a car. I am capable of getting across Berlin on my own."

The driver shrugged. "Ministry orders, Herr Muller." He carried the case down to the car and opened the door to the passenger compartment.

The drive was short. On a warmer morning Markus might have walked.

Berlin was still quiet and a hoar of frost softened the cities harder edges. Even Nollendorfplatz, where the windows were boarded with wood and the scorch marks still blackened the stone buildings, seemed serene.

Markus hadn't felt much sympathy for the people who were here before Hitler cleaned up the city. The way they indulged their perversions in public had shocked his Protestant sense of propriety. Now their bars were shut and their theatres closed and they were forced to wear pink and black triangles. Many of his friends believed this, at least, was a good thing. Markus was no longer sure.

Berlin was more respectable now, Markus thought as the car accelerated out of the square towards Tiergarten, but it was no longer the city he'd once loved living in.

The open spaces of the park were silent, empty and white and the car cruised unnoticed towards Schloss Bellevue. The white wedding-cake palace loomed out of the mist that rolled

up from the River Spree and the car rumbled and crunched up the gravel driveway. The entrance was wrapped in scaffolding and the morning's first workers were steeling themselves for the day ahead, clutching coffee and cigarettes and huddling around a brazier.

"I'll make sure your bags get to your room, Herr Muller," the driver said. Then he rushed off to scrounge a coffee from the workmen.

Markus watched him go, momentarily at a loss. The doors of the palace seemed too imposing, he couldn't just stride up and rap on them, confident of a reply. Before his dilemma deepened, the doors opened and Albert Speer strode out.

"Herr Muller!" Speer boomed into the crackling morning air. "Come inside! It is too bitter a morning to be admiring the view."

At the door Speer shook Markus' hand warmly and greeted him as a long lost friend, then he stood aside and showed him into a hallway that was already bustling with life.

"Please excuse me, my assistant Hauptsturmführer Lietzen will take care of you for a moment," Speer signalled to a tall, Prussian-looking SS officer who stepped forward smartly. "I just have to take care of this riff raff."

Markus watched as Speer shoo the workmen from their brazier. They wouldn't be working here today. The SS man coughed politely but firmly and Markus turned to him.

"If you will come with me, Herr Muller, I will have you

shown to your room."

Markus nodded and Lietzen led him into the palace.

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"In many ways those were the most exciting two days of my career," Markus stared out at the long-eared wheat swaying in the afternoon breeze. "I heard about things I thought impossible. Do you read science fiction, Anne?"

"Not really," Anne shrugged. "I've seen films..."

Markus shook his head but smiled. "When I was young it was all I read. That conference was like a really good science fiction story, a new world opened up before me that day. I could see it all and - just briefly - I was standing in the heart of it."

Markus shook his head softly as though still amazed at the idea of it.

"There were technicians. One told us about how we were going to explore the solar system with rockets. In ten years, he said, Germany would build a new Berlin on the moon. There was another, from Heinkel, who explained how we would fly around the world in hours. He showed us film of a small plane, not flying yet but with a jet engine strapped to it. Such a thing was beyond belief. It was incredible. And someone from Otto Hahn's nuclear research group explained how we would have limitless, free, clean energy."

Markus coughed. "These are the things you want to hear

about, aren't they Anne?

Anne looked up from her notepad and nodded.

"There was a doctor, Doctor Munch, he worked in the Berlin state medical department. He told us how they were going to cure malaria and smallpox and typhus. He said they were going to treat the abnormal and the incurable and remove the burden they placed on society. I applauded."

Markus put his hands in his lap and stared at them carefully. He turned them over, examining them.

"There was another one, who'd been working in America on genetics. He told us about Oswald Avery's work on DNA and his belief that this was the thing that carried the body's genetic information. It was only a matter of time before we could manipulate the very stuff of life itself and become stronger, smarter, better. I cheered."

Markus coughed again and took a sip of water.

"How could you have known what they meant?" Anne asked.

"I should have known!" Markus glared at her. "Be aware! The signs were everywhere. Everyone should have known!"

Anne looked out into the fields. A bird, a hawk she thought, was circling and circling. Then suddenly it fell from the sky.

"By the time I gave my presentation, at the end of the first day, I could hardly contain myself. I told them about how much we could already do and about how much more we would soon be able to achieve. They loved it. They all wanted to

talk to me over dinner. You see they all recognised how important our machines could be for their work. Planning, calculating, modelling..." Markus caught himself counting the advantages off on his fingers and smiled. They both watched as the hawk fluttered back into the sky, a small animal clamped in its talons.

"I was always so enthusiastic for my work. Of course I got it all wrong. I was so bound up with the idea of my card counting machines that I never even considered the potential of purely electronic calculating machines. The transistor was just a toy at this stage. Even as I was talking to them, John Atanasoff was working out how to build an electronic computer at Iowa State. My own university! I went to school with him."

Markus shook his head. It clearly still bothered him that he'd been wrong.

"But the others were wrong too," Anne said. "They didn't build cities on the moon. They never cured those diseases. We aren't supermen."

Markus nodded. "But they were so certain they would succeed... If things had been different... Who knows?"

He shrugged and, slowly, stood up.

"The next day wasn't as exciting for me. There was a psychiatrist and an anthropologist who spent their time explaining why the Germans were superior to everyone else. There was an archaeologist and an historian who explained how Germans were purer than everyone else. I remember wondering

why everyone else seemed to take this rubbish seriously."

Markus walked across to the window and stared out at the slowly lengthening afternoon shadows.

"But then Speer spoke."

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The afternoon's low winter sunlight slanted through the tall windows that lined one side of the ballroom in Schloss Bellevue. Gradually shifting bars of light and shadow alternated across the rows of seated technicians, doctors, scientists and uniformed soldiers.

Markus watched millions of motes of dust sparkle and fade as they floated across the room. The crystal chandeliers that hung in two rows down the length of the ballroom cast hundreds of rainbows against the far wall.

Markus looked at his watch again. He wanted to be home with Judith. He was tired and still a little hungover. The second day of the conference had seemed to drag on forever.

Suddenly everyone around him stood up and applauded.

Markus snapped up, applauding too, although it took him a few moments to realise who had got everyone so excited.

Albert Speer was standing at the lectern smiling and waving his hands, encouraging them all to sit down. It took several minutes before the crowd settled down and the shuffling and scraping of chairs finally faded.

Speer, still smiling, rested both hands on the lectern.

He gazed around the room, nodding at his audience.

"Friends. What have we achieved here in two short days?" He continued looking around the room. "Do you know? Do you realise what you have done?"

The crowd shuffled a little uneasily. Speer kept smiling.

"Imagine tomorrow. Imagine what we will create. Let the British and their navy have the ocean. We will have the skies! Let the Russians have their tiny Steppes. We will have the limitless heavens! You have set Germany free. That is what you have done today!"

As one the audience rose to their feet. From every throat escaped a violent roar of approval. People weren't just clapping, they were banging their chairs and stamping their feet. Markus found himself being slapped on the back by a psychologist called Klingmann as he joined in the cheering.

Speer rocked back from the platform. This time the commotion took even longer to settle down but eventually, Speer stepped back to the microphone.

"Friends, you must restrain yourselves, or I will never finish..."

Everyone laughed and settled down.

"I am, I hope, still a young man. Next month I will celebrate my thirty-third birthday." More cheers and laughter. Speer nodded. "And yet, when I was born, man was making his first fragile attempts at powered flight. Tomorrow

we will fly faster than sound! We will leave the very earth and colonise new worlds. It is fantastic but Germany will do it! This is what you have done today!"

Another, more polite round of applause.

"When I was a boy, the words and deeds of great men could only be read about in newspapers. Today, every German can listen to the Fuhrer on the radio. Tomorrow, they will see him, they will see the whole world in their own homes on televisions. A new era of enlightenment and education will be born. This is what you have done today!"

The mention of the Fuhrer increased the volume of applause. A few voices cheered their approval.

"Diseases that have hunted mankind since the dawn of time will be cured. Weaknesses that have crippled families for generations will be eliminated. People will live longer and healthier lives. This is what we do here today." Speer stabbed the lectern with his finger. "Here! Today!"

The cheering got louder. Markus found himself on his feet applauding wildly.

"So, on behalf of myself, on behalf of The Fuhrer, on behalf of Germany herself, I order you: Imagine the future. We will create a new world. With the Fuhrer's leadership, and your imaginations, there is nothing we cannot do. Imagine the future and Germany will build it."

The cheering turned into a roar and Markus could not tell where his voice ended and the others' began.

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"That night, as I was driven home, they were smashing the windows of Jewish shops all across Berlin. You could see the smoke from Oranienburger Strasse from the windows of Schloss Bellevue. It was Kristallnacht."

They were in the kitchen, surrounded by solid wooden furniture, Markus was shakily hacking slices from a ham. He took a plate from a line neatly displayed on a looming Welsh dresser and pointed Anne to a loaf of bread, still slightly warm beneath a cloth on the long table.

"Help yourself." He handed her a long bread knife and placed the butter dish on the table. Markus filled a small plate with ham and sprinkled salt on it. He walked across the kitchen and stood by the sink, eating slowly.

"What did you do?" Anne asked between greedy mouthfuls.

"We should have left immediately, but we thought that was the worst things could get," Markus shook his head. "We wanted to believe that it was just the mob and that the government would stop them. Judith stayed with friends who lived in Emstal, just to be safe, but we weren't worried."

Markus turned away, he ran his hand through the pots of herbs that grew on the window sill above the sink.

"We were Americans after all, we didn't think there was any danger."

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Markus paused at the top of the steps outside the Reich Statistical Office, he put down his briefcase and took a packet of cigarettes from his coat pocket.

As he lit the cigarette he looked down on an almost empty Alexanderplatz. A few months ago the great open heart of Berlin would have been bustling even now, long after dark, even in the heart of winter. Three months ago German troops had invaded Poland and though the war with France and Britain had gotten off to a stuttering start, people were nervous.

Tonight Alexanderplatz was quiet, though not quite empty. The sky was clear now, but a fresh covering of snow had fallen during the day and it was possible to make out the tracks of the small groups of men who'd recently crossed the square. Markus let his eyes follow one line to a pool of darkness.

A match flared. Markus jumped. The edges of three dark shapes were outlined and then faded. The tip of a cigarette flared red and Markus felt himself being watched.

He shrugged his shoulders, pulling his coat tight against the winter wind. As he bent to pick his case and the door opened behind him.

A messenger boy stood at the door.

"Herr Muller?"

"Yes?"

The boy held out a small envelope. "This was delivered a

few moments ago."

Markus took the envelope and nodded. The boy disappeared back inside. Markus turned the envelope over in his hand. His name was, in intricate gothic detail, inscribed on the front. It looked like an invitation to a party. He ripped it open and took out the single sheet of paper.

"Do not go home. They know your secret. They are waiting for you. This is your only chance of escape."

Markus took a shaky step backwards. The whole city seemed to reel and spin about him. Then he stopped. He was aware, again, of the men in the shadows. He took a deep breath then exhaled a swirling rose of steam into the night air. Steadied, he went down the steps to his waiting car.

The drive to Emstal took an age. He fought the urge to rush to Judith as fast as he could and drove steadily through the city. Several times he stopped suddenly or took long detours, tracking back on himself, making sure he wasn't being followed.

Then he left Berlin. The further from the heart of the city he drove, first through the Grunewald forest to Wannsee then in the more open farmland beyond Potsdam, the more treacherous with ice and snow the roads became. Now, even though now he would have gladly surrendered to the urge to flatten the accelerator against the car's chassis, he was forced to slow down. He swore softly, over and over.

As Markus entered Emstal, the Moon was high and full and

the thick band of The Milky Way shrouded the world. Markus thought for a moment about the meeting at Schloss Bellevue and the plans of those scientists, The Moon, Mars, Venus and beyond. He remembered the cheering and the excitement, and he felt sick. He knew now there would be a price to pay.

As the car struggled into the drive of the house at Emstal, he saw at once that everything was dark. The door was hanging limply on a single hinge. He looked into the hallway and dining room. They had been ransacked.

"Judith?" Markus called out, more in hope than expectation. "Konrad? Cordula?"

He stopped. If they'd been warned, as he had, and escaped, the plan was to meet in Switzerland. If they hadn't, he couldn't stay here. They'd come looking for him.

He left the house. It was snowing again and the bitter wind had got up. The Moon and the stars had disappeared. Markus shuffled towards the car and sat for a time, his hands gripping the cold steering wheel, hot tears turned to a cold stream on his cheeks. He started the engine and gingerly turned the car around.

The beam of his lights lit the driveway and the gate beyond. A dark car sat across the entrance to the driveway. Markus felt sick with fear. They were here already. He paused for a moment, unsure of what to do.

Someone moved in the back seat of the car. He saw a cap, the collar of a uniform. Markus clutched the steering wheel

tightly and revved the engine of the car. He would not be taken easily. The figure in the back seat turned away, saying something to the driver. The car started to move.

Markus gasped, sagging in relief.

The man in the car turned towards him and Markus thought he saw a face. Then the car was gone.

Markus waited. No one else came.

He had everything he needed in the car, so he drove into the night, following the plan, making for Geneva.

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"Was it Speer sitting in that car at Emstal?"

"At the time, I thought it was, but now I don't know. I'll never know." Markus sighed and gripped the edge of the kitchen table with both hands.

Anne stopped scribbling. "You think Albert Speer wrote you the warning note?"

"What would he be doing in Emstal if he wasn't trying to make sure I got away?"

"But why would he have risked helping you?"

"With Speer there are always many explanations. Perhaps he genuinely wanted to help, or perhaps he wanted to cover up the fact that he'd let a Jew-lover see Germany's biggest secrets. Or maybe it was a bit of both," Markus shrugged. "Or maybe it was just some Nazi officer lost in the snow."

"Did you ever contact him? After the war?"

"I thought about writing to him, after he was released from Spandau, but I couldn't. I still hated him too much."

"Hate?" She said. "But if that was him, you owe him your life."

"My wife did not escape."

Anne looked away.

"Judith wasn't in Switzerland." Markus's eyes glistened. "She was taken to Theresienstadt first and then to Auschwitz. I never saw her again."

Markus stopped, setting his chin firmly and staring at the ceiling.

"The American embassy did their best, but I had taken a German passport to help make my position more legitimate. The Nazi's said my wife was subject to their laws about marriage between the races." Markus looked at Anne and saw that she was crying. He handed her a tissue. "Judith was a New Yorker, her parents were practically communists, she'd never even been inside a synagogue. Not that it mattered. Blood will out, as Todt said."

They were quiet for a time.

"Of course I did see Speer once more."

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The courtroom at Nuremberg was cramped, crowded and hot. The judges, sitting in front of the Soviet, British, American and French flags, slumped in their seats. Some

flicked through papers or scribbled notes, only the Russians, Volchkov and Nikitchenko, sat bolt upright and, in their Red Army uniforms, stared fixedly at the Germans opposite.

Between the judges and the accused sat rows of lawyers and secretaries.

Film cameras whirred in a corner and their lights glared off the white helmets of the military policemen surrounding the dock. Twenty-one Nazis were crammed into the narrow space. Goering, irritable and fat, slouched in one corner. Jodl, still a soldier, sat upright, his arms folded, eyes fixed on whoever was speaking. Speer fidgeted, staring at his feet.

Next to the dock were the translators' booths and, today, this was where Markus sat. He'd used up every favour he'd ever been owed to get here. Occasionally an interpreter would raise a hand and Markus would come over and fiddle with the wires on his headphones or replace a microphone. But, for the most part, Markus sat and watched the Nazis.

The day dragged on. The Germans were being called, one by one, to make their final statements. Speer was one of the last. When he stood, Markus noticed that he stooped slightly though, at just forty, he was young compared to many of the others. For a moment it occurred to Markus that he might be trying to seem smaller, to conceal his full height.

However as he began to speak, Speer straightened up and stopped fidgeting.

"Eighty million people were deprived of independent thought. It was possible to subject them to the will of one man. The telephone, teletype, and radio made it possible. Orders from the highest sources were transmitted directly to the lowest-ranking units, where, because of the high authority, they were carried out without criticism."

Some of the other Nazis shifted, grunting angrily at each other. Speer looked only at the paper in his hand.

"In five or ten years the technique of warfare will make it possible to fire rockets from continent to continent with uncanny precision. By atomic power it can destroy one million people in the centre of New York in a matter of seconds with a rocket operated, perhaps, by only 10 men, invisible, without previous warning, faster than sound."

Suddenly Markus was overwhelmed by memories of the conference in Schloss Bellevue. He heard the thumping of feet on the floor. He heard his own voice cheering. He felt the excitement grip his gut and, just for a moment, he felt regret that some of those magnificent dreams would never be realised.

"If a modern industrial state utilizes its intelligence, its science, its technical developments, and its production in order to gain a lead in the sphere of armament, then it can, because of its technical superiority, completely overtake and conquer the world, if other nations should employ their technical abilities during that same period not

for war but on behalf of the cultural progress of humanity."

Markus thought about the things he'd done to help the Nazis and his stomach twisted. Didn't he deserve to be there, in the dock, with Speer? He tried to imagine the millions he'd helped kill, but he could only see Judith's face and he hated himself for his selfishness.

"Today technocracy threatens every country in the world. Therefore, the more technical the world becomes, the more necessary is the promotion of individual freedom and the individual's awareness of himself as a counterbalance."

Speer sat down and fixed his gaze back on the floor between his feet. The judge called the next Nazi.

When the proceedings ended, the defendants stood. For the first time Speer looked around the courtroom. He seemed surprised, as if he just noticed the observers and journalists, the cameramen and lawyers, the judges and the interpreters, the ranks of soldiers.

Speer gaze scanned across Markus's face. He paused and looked back, smiling automatically, then memory caught up and the smile vanished.

Markus tried to speak but words wouldn't come. Only the glass walls of the translators' booths separated them.

Speer gave him a shallow German bow of respect then stopped. He picked up the translation headphones and rubbed a finger across the plastic, a grim smile on his lips.

Markus stared at him, confused for a moment, then picked

up his own headphones. He turned them over looking for the same spot that Speer was rubbing.

Speer said something. Markus couldn't hear him, the booth was soundproofed and the microphones were off, Markus tapped the glass and shrugged.

Speer nodded, understanding. He repeated the phrase, shaping the words carefully.

"Be aware."

Markus nodded and Speer turned back to his guards.

Markus put the headphones down on the desk and leant back in a chair, staring at them.

The logo of the company who made the headphones was embossed on the plastic.

IBM.

*

"What do you think he meant?" Anne was scribbling furiously.

Markus shook his head. "I wish I could be sure, but that's the thing about Speer, nothing is ever certain."

Slowly Markus pulled himself out of the chair.

"Now it is late and I am not as young as you. I am tired. We must finish."

Anne looked disconsolate, then noticing that the day was dimming, she closed her notebook.

"Thank you so much for your time, Mister Muller. This

has been very useful."

Markus shook her hand, bowing slightly.

"You are welcome," Markus said. "You will come back?"

"Oh yes," she nodded. "There's still so much I want..."

Markus raised a hand.

"You will come back. We will talk more."

"But please, just tell me. What do you think he meant?"

Markus sighed.

"Perhaps he simply saw the irony in IBM serving both sides and profiting whoever won. But I think, no, I hope... I hope he meant that even if no one told us what our work would mean, we should have known. It was our duty to know and to do something about it. It was our duty and we failed."

Anne nodded and the two of them walked to the door of the farmhouse. Anne stepped outside.

"Of course he could just have been reminding me of my own part in the Nazi slaughter of innocents.

Anne paused on the step and shook her head.

"You couldn't have known."

Markus saw his wife in her eyes. He pulled her close for a fierce hug.

"Thank you for listening to an old man's ramblings."

Anne started to say something, then stopped.

They separated.

Markus nodded and Anne turned towards her car.

As she left Markus thought he heard her speak.

"Be aware," he thought he heard her say.